

Stephanie Jones
The Conservatory 2004
Royal icing on nylon tulle

Belmore Park Conservatory
(Glass House)



Artist statement

To conserve is to guard against loss. A garden conservatory is not only a structure for the propagation and cultivation of plants, but a place for their presentation and public display. Similarly, sugar has both functional and ornamental applications. Used as a preservative in many foods, it is also the principal ingredient of cake decoration. Ceremonial cakes mark the passing of rituals in life, and the craft is associated with a mastery of illusionist skills. Sugar embodies so many qualities – whiteness, purity, sweetness, femininity, fragility and decay.

Using piped icing as drawing tool, my work explores ideas connected to the theme of environmental conservation. I have illustrated a selection of native flora typical to the indigenous grasslands of the Goulburn region, most of which are small and delicate looking plants, often overlooked because of their "weedy" appearance. I have elevated these to the same scale as the rose, the iconic European park and garden flower, prized for its classical form and extensive cultivation.

My project is also framed by the historical context of the Victorian era. Belmore Park was dedicated in 1869 to mark the opening of the railway, and is surrounded by the grand architecture of a prosperous and rapidly expanding colony. Royal Icing also takes its name from this time. Weighing 300 lbs and measuring 3 yards in circumference, the wedding cake of Victoria and Albert was a culinary feat, symbolically reflecting the accomplishments of the industrial revolution. And of course it was Prince Albert who oversaw one of the most ambitious achievements of the age, the largest glass house ever constructed, the Crystal Palace.

The Conservatory is a marriage of personal and cultural histories, of domestic craft on an architectural scale.

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